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WAS MARIAH CAREY SABOTAGED?

Her team says disastrous NYE show was for ratings. 15

Many reasons for optimism for Eagles after 7-9 season. 22, 24-25

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DERAILED CAREER

Former train caller says his moment in the spotlight came to a bitter end. 2

SAM NEWHOUSE

3 things you need to know

OBAMA TO DELIVER FAREWELL ADDRESS IN CHICAGO ON JAN. 10

1 President Barack Obama will deliver a farewell address on Jan. 10 to reflect on his time in office and say thank you to his supporters, he said in an email statement released on Monday. Obama, noting that the first president of the United States, George Washington, had penned a farewell address in 1796, said he would deliver his speech in his hometown of Chicago. "I'm thinking about [the remarks] as a chance to say thank you for this amazing journey, to celebrate the ways you've changed this country for the better these past eight years, and to offer some thoughts on where we all go from here," he said. Republican Donald Trump will be sworn in to office on Jan. 20. During his campaign for the White House, Trump pledged to undo many of Obama's signature policy measures, including his health-care law. Obama, who campaigned hard for Trump's Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, has sought to ensure a smooth transition of power despite major policy differences with his successor. He also leaves his party without a clear figurehead as he leaves the White House. "Since 2009, we've faced our fair share of challenges, and come through them stronger," Obama said in the email, likely foreshadowing a theme for his speech. "That's because we have never let go of a belief that has guided us ever since our founding — our conviction that, together, we can change this country for the better." REUTERS

GETTY IMAGES

AROUND 60 KILLED AS DRUG GANGS CLASH IN BRAZIL PRISON MASSACRE

2 Around 60 people were killed in a bloody prison riot in the Amazon jungle city of Manaus sparked by a war between rival drug gangs, officials said on Monday, in the worst violence in over two decades in Brazil's overcrowded penitentiary system. The head of security for Amazonas state, Sergio Fontes, told a news conference that the death toll could rise as authorities get a clearer idea of the scale of the rebellion sparked by a fight between rival drug gangs. Fontes told reporters that several of the dead had their decapitated bodies thrown over the prison wall — and that most of those killed came from one gang. "This was another chapter in the silent and ruthless war of drug trafficking," he said. Pedro Florencio, the Amazonas state prison secretary, said that the massacre was a "revenge killing" that formed part of an ongoing feud between criminal gangs in Brazil. The riot began late Sunday and was brought under control on Monday morning, Fontes said. Authorities were still counting the prisoners to determine how many had escaped, he added, with reports that up to 300 fled. Just as the riot began in one unit of the Anisio Jobim prison complex, dozens of prisoners in the second unit started a mass escape in what authorities said was a coordinated effort to distract guards. REUTERS

POPE TELLS BISHOPS TO HAVE ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL ABUSE

3 Pope Francis has told bishops around the world they must adhere to a policy of zero tolerance for clergy who sexually abuse children and begged forgiveness for "a sin that shames us." In a letter sent on Dec. 28 but released by the Vatican only on Monday, Francis said: "I would like us to renew our complete commitment to ensuring that these atrocities will no longer take place in our midst." "[The church] recognizes the sins of some of her members: the sufferings, the experiences and the pain of minors who were abused sexually by priests. It is a sin that shames us," Francis wrote in the letter. But victims' groups say he has not done enough, particularly to hold to account bishops who tolerated sexual abuse or covered it up. REUTERS

Glenn Lewis, a former train caller for Conrail, speaks about his new book, "The Railroad Conspiracy." RANDI FAIR

Golden-voiced train caller reflects on career struggles

Glenn Lewis says in a self-published book that he lost his position as popular train caller due to workplace bullying.

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In the late 1970s, Glenn Lewis attained a measure of fame as the booming baritone announcing the arrivals and departures of Conrail trains at the Reading Terminal.

Passengers were impressed by his crisp, staccato announcements of train schedules. A few called local newspaper reporters and laudatory articles about Lewis' voice started to appear within just months of his taking the job in 1976.

"The Howard Cosell of Reading Terminal," people called Lewis, according to the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, which praised his "deep, mellifluous" voice. The North City Press wrote that Lewis' baritone announcements were like "live entertainment" for commuters.

"People admired my calls of trains because they could understand what I said, instead of the garbled messages that all too often came through the loudspeakers from the other train callers," Lewis explained.

At age 75, Lewis recalls his brief period as a train caller for Conrail like it was yesterday.

> *"I loved the passengers."*
>
> Glenn Lewis

In some ways, those few months were the best of his life, he said.

"I loved the passengers," Lewis said, recalling his years working for Conrail, before it dissolved to have most of his operations replaced by SEPTA. "Every day, somebody came over to shake my hand."

His favorite nickname was "Has Voice, Will Travel."

He still has the gift and can do a decent train announcement:

"For those that was not around when this train was being called, that foxy Fox Chase local that leaves out at 6:18 right here on Track No. 7, we've got two minutes remaining. Kindly watch your step, please."

But as Lewis recalls it, the 15 minutes of fame came with a swift punishment. He claims that weeks after his first article appeared in the newspapers, he was ordered to take a two-week vacation — and came back to find himself demoted to elevator operator.

He claims that during the following years, he was rotated through custodial and cleaning assignments while only picking up a few shifts as train caller, in what he believes was retaliation.

"Why was it, after I got interviewed in the newspaper, they want to take me off and have me mopping floors when they already got extra people?" Lewis asked.

He added that over the years he experienced workplace bullying, mockery from multiple supervisors and even racial slurs.

"The people that bothered me was jealous," he said.

Lewis' rise and fall is the subject of his new book, "The Railroad Conspiracy," which he self-published through Amazon. In it, the North Philly native gives his account of how racial prejudice and union pressure forced him to leave Conrail.

Lewis characterizes his experience as one of racial discrimination, but he acknowledges that some black co-workers picked on him and threatened him as well. He did eventually get a hearing in federal court for his discrimination claims, but they were dismissed.

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2008 BMW X3 — 4X4! — $242/Month

2012 Kia Sorrento — Sun Roof! — $242/Month

2014 Nissan Rogue S — 4X4! — $258/Month

2013 Hyundai Tucson — Leather! — $258/Month

2009 Acura MDX — 3rd Row! — $258/Month

2007 Chevrolet Tahoe LTZ — 3rd Row! — $274/Month

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Delaware man wounded, survives deadly attack at Istanbul nightclub

Jake Raak told news outlets that he survived the ordeal that killed 39 by playing dead.

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An American man shot in the New Year's Eve attack on a nightclub in Istanbul says he survived the early morning ordeal by playing dead as a gunman fired more than 100 rounds into the crowd early Sunday morning.

"When he shot me I didn't move — I just let him shoot me," Jake Raak, 35, told NBC News. "I was shot when I was already on the ground. He was shooting people that he had already shot."

Raak, from Greenville, Delaware, said the gunman sprayed bullets through the crowd and targeted those who were lying on the floor. ISIS has since claimed responsibility for the early-morning bloodbath, allegedly targeting Christians in a statement posted to Twitter.

More than 60 people were injured and 39 were killed — most of whom were foreigners — in the rampage at Istanbul's Reina nightclub around 1:30 a.m. Sunday. The incident lasted barely 10 minutes.

Raak was with a group of about nine people, seven of whom were shot. The Chadds Ford native said he was shot in the hip and the bullet traveled to his knee.

Jake Raak, a 35-year-old Delaware resident, was among around 60 people injured in the shooting early Sunday morning. FACEBOOK

"You just have to stay as calm as you can," he told NBC News. "I took a bullet."

Surveillance footage of the suspect has emerged as a manhunt is underway in Turkey. The chilling footage shows the gunman — armed with a long-barreled firearm and dressed in black, wearing a backpack — outside the club before storming inside.

He killed a police officer and civilian outside, then sprayed bullets on the crowd at Reina, packed with an estimated 500 people celebrating the new year.

Turkish police have detained eight people and are questioning them in connection to the attack. Authorities believe the shooter, however, carried out the attack alone.

ISIS forces posted a statement on Twitter early Monday claiming responsibility for the attack.

"In continuation of the blessed operations which ISIS carries out against Turkey, a soldier of the brave caliphate attacked one of the most popular nightclubs while Christians were celebrating their holiday," the statement, which has not been independently verified, said.

Another statement, released through a news agency unofficially tied to the terror group, claimed the attack was retaliation against Turkish military involvement in Syria.

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Thousands ring in 2017 at annual Mummers Parade

The annual New Year's Day strut down Broad Street brought smiles and snazzy outfits. ALEXIS SACHDEV

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NEW PHILLY AREA TRAILS SHOW 2016 WASN'T ALL BAD

RANDY LOBASSO

2016 is over, but its place as the worst year in recent history has become one of those viral internet memes. Some beloved celebrities died, the global refugee crisis hit a boiling point (and became a horrible point of contention in the West), and American and Russian internet trolls teamed up to help a guy who argues with teenagers on the internet become the leader of the free world.

Yikes. Well, I'm here to let you know that 2016 wasn't all bad — at least for those of us willing to unplug for a while and enjoy all the scenery our region has to offer.

That's right: This is a happy bike column.

Contrary to popular opinion, politics is not completely divided. Local and national political leaders of all stripes, nonprofit leadership and private organizations managed to come together throughout 2016 and build out the region's Circuit Trails, making bicycling, running and every healthy recreational activity better for the Delaware Valley.

The Circuit Trails are the Greater Philadelphia region's interconnected series of multiuse paved trails. Through advocacy, federal, state and local grants and private funding, the Greater Philadelphia region saw its extensive trail network hit 320 miles last year, with some awesome connections and a record-setting number of people using those trails.

Financing can be raised when we all agree something is awesome. The Circuit Trail network managed to receive more than $19 million for the planning, design and construction of those trails — including $4 million from the William Penn Foundation, a long-time supporter of trails in the Greater Philadelphia region.

People love using their recreational infrastructure. The Schuylkill Banks, the part of the Schuylkill River Trail that cuts through Philly along the Schuylkill River, was named Best Urban Trail by USA Today in 2015. In 2016, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's counter along the trail recorded more than three million uses on the Schuylkill River Trail around the region — 1.7 million of which were along the Schuylkill Banks.

And hard work pays off. Sullivan's Bridge, connecting the Schuylkill River Trail and Valley Forge National Park, was set for a long-overdue opening. Long story short: An original one-lane bridge, called the Betzwood Bridge, was built in West Norriton in the 1800s and had always been a nice connection for cyclists getting into Valley Forge National Historic Park.

In 1991, PennDOT decided it had to tear down the bridge due to "severe metal corrosion." They closed it. No replacement was ever planned. It took 25 years, but after fierce advocacy from the Delaware Valley's bicycling community, Sullivan's Bridge, a brand-new bike/ped bridge, opened in the summer of 2016, connecting the Schuylkill River Trail to Valley Forge National Park.

Sullivan's Bridge may have been the most dramatic opening, but we also saw 2.5 new miles along the Kinkora Trail in South Jersey, 2.8 new miles of the first phase of the Chester Creek Trail, 0.1 miles of the Sugarhouse Casino Trail Extension (small but useful), 0.5 miles of the Pencoyd Trail and plenty of others, totaling 11.85 new miles.

Randy LoBasso is communications manager for the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia.

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Islamic State claims Istanbul attack, gunman remains at large

Photos of Istanbul nightclub terror attack's victims are placed at site in Istanbul, Turkey. GETTY IMAGES

Authorities are close to identifying the gunman, a Turkish spokesman said, after gathering fingerprints and information on his appearance, and had detained eight other people.

Relatives and friends mourn during a funeral for a victim. GETTY IMAGES

Islamic State claimed responsibility on Monday for a New Year's Day mass shooting in a packed Istanbul nightclub that killed 39 people, an attack carried out by a lone gunman who remains at large.

It described the Reina nightclub, where many foreigners as well as Turks were killed, as a gathering point for Christians celebrating their "apostate holiday." The attack, it said, was revenge for Turkish military involvement in Syria.

"The apostate Turkish government should know that the blood of Muslims shed with airplanes and artillery fire will, with God's permission, ignite a fire in their own land," the Islamic State declaration said.

At a news conference in Ankara, Turkish government spokesman Numan Kurtulmus made no reference to the claim but said it was clear Turkey's military operations in Syria had annoyed terrorist groups and those behind them.

"This attack is a message to Turkey against its decisive operations across the border," Kurtulmus said, adding that the offensive in Syria would continue until all threats to Turkey were removed.

"This attack is a message to Turkey against its decisive operations across the border."
Kurtulmus

NATO member Turkey is part of the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State and launched the incursion into neighboring Syria in August to drive the radical Sunni militants, as well as Kurdish militia fighters, away from its borders.

The jihadist group has been blamed for at least half a dozen attacks on civilian targets in Turkey over the past 18 months; but, other than assassinations, this is the first time it has directly claimed any of them. It made the statement on one of its Telegram channels, a method used after attacks elsewhere.

Nationals of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Morocco, Libya, Israel, India, Canada, a Turkish-Belgian dual citizen and a Franco-Tunisian woman were among those killed at the nightclub on the shores of the Bosphorus waterway. Twenty-five of the dead were foreigners, according to the state-run Anadolu news agency.

All of those killed died from gunshot wounds, some of them shot at a very close distance or even point-blank range, according to a forensics report quoted by Milliyet newspaper.

Police distributed a hazy black-and-white photo of the alleged gunman taken from security footage.

The authorities believe the attacker may be from a Central Asian nation and suspect he had links to Islamic State, the Hurriyet newspaper said. It said he may be from the same cell responsible for a gun-and-bomb attack on Istanbul's main airport in June, in which 45 people were killed and hundreds wounded. REUTERS

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New Congress prepares to undo Obamacare, weigh Trump personnel picks

Obama is scheduled to meet on Wednesday with congressional Democrats to discuss strategies for fending off Republican attacks on Obamacare.

A new, Republican-controlled U.S. Congress convenes on Tuesday eager to repeal major portions of President Barack Obama's health care law and roll back environmental and financial industry regulations, but could quickly become embroiled in fights over President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet choices.

Leading Democrats on Monday warned of a fierce fight over Obamacare, which is expected to have 13.8 million people enrolled in the program that aims to provide health insurance to economically disadvantaged people and to expand coverage for others.

Vice President-elect Mike Pence will meet with his fellow House Republicans the same day to rally them on repealing Obamacare, Politico reported.

Republicans in coming weeks will try to steer legislation through Congress using procedures that would not require Democratic cooperation. Their bill, which has not been unveiled, is expected to repeal Obamacare, but postpone the actions for two or three years while also maintaining some of the law's provisions.

"We're going to fight as hard as ever to protect the ACA [Affordable Care Act], said Representative Steny Hoyer, the House of Representatives' second-ranking Democrat.

Speaking to reporters, Hoyer and House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said they would launch an effort to mobilize grassroots support for Obamacare by explaining how repeal would create a

ripple effect hurting a majority of Americans.

For years, Republicans have hammered away at Obamacare, insisting it was unworkable and was hampering job growth. With control of Congress and the White House, they will be in a position to enact a repeal bill.

The Senate will have more than legislation on its hands in the new year.

It has the daunting task of debating and voting on the scores of appointees Trump already has announced to head his Cabinet departments and for other top jobs in the new administration.

It also is expected to receive a Supreme Court nomination early on from Trump, triggering a likely confirmation war. REUTERS

NEW YEAR STRAIGHT AHEAD!

TOM FOREMAN
Opinion

CNN's Tom Foreman is the author of the book "My Year of Running Dangerously." @tomforemancnn

The champagne bottles have been tossed into the recycling bin, the confetti has been swept, and in D.C. all thoughts are turning to the next big party — the inauguration. Of course, not everyone will be celebrating, but still here are my three things to watch this week in politics.

1. TRAIN IN VAIN

The Trump train has been steaming through the news with ambitious plans for the President-elect's first days in office, but Democrats are piling rocks on the tracks. They may not be able to stop Mr. Trump's ideas cold, but they'd sure like to slow them down. As much as the President-elect has talked about dismantling Obamacare, bailing out of climate change agreements, and more, the Dems have been preparing a counter-strategy to make it as hard as possible. And while Congressional Dems will be working the hallways inside the Capitol, expect efforts to rally his opponents outside. My bet is they will try to cast a shadow on the inauguration festivities by underscoring the many millions of Americans who voted against him.

2. DREAM ON

Children of undocumented immigrants, the so-called Dreamers that President Barack Obama tried to help with his executive powers, are bracing for Team Trump to reverse course making them vulnerable to deportation. And they're not taking it sitting down. Across the country, they are joining forces with Democratic activists to stage protests and demonstrations ahead of the inauguration. More importantly, they are talking to lawyers. They may not yet be ready to roll out their legal strategy for staying, but watch for this group to make a lot more noise fast.

3. TWEET, TWEET

One of the bigger questions of the new year: Can anyone on Mr. Trump's rapidly growing team contain his runaway Twitter habit? And should they? His tendency to fire off verbal rockets proved both a strength and weakness during his campaign, but now as he prepares to take the oath, watch to see if he keeps tweeting at will — or finally gives his thumbs a rest.

Judge rules S. Carolina church gunman can act as own lawyer

Roof was found guilty in December on all federal charges in the shooting deaths of nine black parishioners at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Carolina in 2015.

Dylann Roof GETTY IMAGES

A U.S. judge on Monday ruled Dylann Roof was mentally fit to serve as his own lawyer in the penalty phase of his trial, when a jury will decide whether to sentence him to be executed for the 2015 massacre at a South Carolina church.

The shooting where Roof had waited for members of a Bible study group to close their eyes in prayer before opening fire sent shockwaves across the United States.

The same jury that convicted him of 33 charges that included hate crimes resulting in death will meet on Wednesday for the penalty phase, where they will decide whether he should be executed.

U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel issued his ruling after hearing testimony from forensic psychiatrist James Ballenger, who examined Roof for five hours over the weekend.

Gergel had kept the competency hearing closed in order to avoid sequestering the jury.

Gergel said he was concerned jurors would inadvertently hear potentially prejudicial information from the hearing if reporters were allowed to cover it, ruling that protecting Roof's right to a fair trial outweighed the media's right to view the hearing.

The judge rejected arguments from press attorney Jay Bender and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jay Richardson, who wanted an open hearing. Gergel also banned relatives of the victims from attending.

The judge previously found Roof competent to stand trial after a hearing held in November ahead of the guilt phase. Roof represented himself during one week of jury selection in November during which prominent capital defense lawyer David Bruck was appointed standby counsel.

That same defense team filed a motion ahead of the penalty phase arguing that Roof was not competent to represent himself after he revealed at a hearing last week that he would not present any evidence or witnesses. REUTERS

Islamic State kills 24 with Baghdad car bomb, attack police stations in Samarra

An Islamic State car bomb killed 24 people in Baghdad's Sadr City district on Monday and the militants also attacked two police stations in the city of Samarra as Iraqi forces fought to oust the group from Mosul, its last major stronghold in Iraq.

At least four other attacks across Baghdad, some also claimed by Islamic State, killed nine more people earlier in the day, bringing the total death toll from bombings in the capital over the past three days to more than 60.

In the attacks in Samarra, about 60 miles north of Baghdad, security sources said multiple gunmen wearing suicide vests took over two police stations, killing at least seven policemen.

The mayor of Samarra, Mahmoud Khalaf, said security forces had regained control, killing at least six assailants, but declined to comment on the number of casualties on the government side.

The pro-Islamic State news agency Amaq said the militants had executed some policemen.

The upsurge in violence comes as U.S.-backed Iraqi forces try to drive Islamic State from the northern city of Mosul, where the militants are putting up fierce resistance.

Islamic State has lost most of the territory it seized in a blitz across northern and western Iraq in 2014 and ceding Mosul would probably spell the end of its self-styled caliphate. But it would still be capable of waging a guerrilla-style insurgency in Iraq and plotting or inspiring attacks on the West.

The wreckage of a vehicle following the blast GETTY IMAGES

"The terrorists will attempt to attack civilians in order to make up for their losses, but we assure the Iraqi people and the world that we are able to end terrorism and shorten its life," Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said after talks with visiting French President Francois Hollande. REUTERS

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U.S. residents who find their state listed below in bold get first dibs at just the $59 minimum set for state residents while all non state residents must pay $134

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NATIONWIDE - The phone lines are ringing off the hook.

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This is not a misprint. For the next 2 days residents who find their state on the Distribution List above in bold are getting individual State Silver Bars at just the state minimum of $59 set by the Lincoln Treasury. That's why everyone should be taking full Vault Bricks loaded with five U.S. State Silver Bars before the deadline ends.

And here's the best part. Every PA, NY, NJ, MD, DE, OH and WV resident who gets

(Continued on next page)

COURTESY: LINCOLN TREASURY
PHOTO ENLARGEMENT SHOWS ENGRAVING DETAIL

(Continued from previous page)

at least two Vault Bricks is also getting free shipping and free handling. That's a real steal because all other state residents must pay over six hundred dollars for each State Vault Brick.

Not long ago, nobody knew that the only U.S. State Silver Bars locked away in the private vaults of the Lincoln Treasury would be allocated to the Federated Mint for a limited release to residents in 7 states. Every single one of the 50 U.S. State Silver Bars are date numbered in the order they ratified the Constitution and were admitted into the Union beginning in the late 1700s.

"As Executive Advisor to the Lincoln Treasury I get paid to deliver breaking news. So, for anyone who hasn't heard yet, highly collectable U.S. State Silver Bars are now being handed over at just the state minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury to residents in 7 states who beat the offer deadline, which is why I pushed for this announcement to be widely advertised," said Mary Ellen Withrow, the emeritus 40th Treasurer of the United States of America.

"These bars are solid .999 pure fine silver and will always be a valuable precious metal which is why everyone is snapping up as many as they can before they're all gone," Withrow said.

There's one thing Withrow wants to make very clear. State residents only have two days to call the Toll Free Order Hotlines to get the U.S. State Silver Bars.

"These valuable U.S. State Silver Bars are impossible to get at banks, credit unions or the U.S. Mint. In fact, they're only being handed over at state minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury to PA, NY, NJ, MD, DE, OH and WV residents who call the Toll Free Hotline before the deadline ends two days from today's publication date", said Timothy J. Shissler, Executive Director of Vault Operations at the private Lincoln Treasury.

To make it fair, special Toll Free Overflow Hotlines have been set up to ensure all residents have an equal chance to get them.

Rapid shipments to state residents are scheduled to begin with the first calls being accepted at precisely 8:30am today.

"We're bracing for all the calls and doing everything we can to make sure no one gets left out, but the U.S. State Silver Bars are only being handed over at just the state resident minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury for the next two days. For now, residents can get the U.S. State Silver Bars at just the state minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury as long as they call before the order deadline ends," confirmed Shissler.

"With so many state residents trying to get these U.S. State Silver Bars, lines are busy so keep trying. All calls will be answered," Shissler said. ■

SPECIAL ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

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■ **A SNEAK PEAK INSIDE SILVER VAULT BRICKS:** Pictured left reveals the valuable .999 pure fine silver bars inside each State Silver Vault Brick. Pictured right are the State Silver Vault Bricks containing the only U.S. State Silver Bars known to exist with the double forged state proclamation. PA, NY, NJ, MD, DE, OH and WV residents are authorized to get individual State Silver Bars at just $59 state resident minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury. That's why everyone should be taking full Vault Bricks loaded with five State Silver Bars before they're all gone. And here's the best part. Every resident who gets at least two Vault Bricks is also getting free shipping and free handling. That's a real steal because all other state residents must pay over six hundred dollars for each State Vault Brick.

Trump: Chicago must seek US help if no progress cutting murder rate

Chicago has outlined plans to reduce violence, including the scheduled hiring of 970 police officers over the next two years to raise the total to 13,500.

President-elect Donald Trump said in a Twitter message on Monday that Chicago's mayor must ask for U.S. government help if the city fails to reduce its homicide rate, which hit a 20-year high in 2016.

The city responded that Trump and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel had previously spoken and agreed to ways the federal government could help.

"Chicago murder rate is record setting — 4,331 shooting victims with 762 murders in 2016. If Mayor can't do it he must ask for Federal help!" Trump tweeted.

The president-elect correctly reported crime numbers published by the Chicago Police Department on Sunday, but the figures were not record-setting.

Although up about 60 percent from the previous year, the 762 homicides in 2016 were the highest annual toll since 1996, when there were 796, according to police data.

During the presidential campaign, Trump periodically referred to Chicago, America's third most populous city, as an example of rising inner-city crime, which ticked up nationally in 2016 after a two-decade downward trend.

As candidate, Trump associated high-crime cities with their Democratic leaders. Emanuel is a former chief of staff to Democratic President Barack Obama.

A spokesman for Emanuel welcomed the prospect of working with Trump once the Republican takes office on Jan. 20, but noted Trump and Emanuel had already spoken on the issue. The two met in New York in December.

"As the president-elect knows from his conversation with the mayor, we agree the federal government has a strong role to play in public safety," spokesman Adam Collins said in a statement.

Collins said the federal government could help by passing stricter gun laws, improving cooperation between federal and local law enforcement and funding programs for at-risk youth.

"We are heartened he is taking this issue seriously and look forward to working with the new administration," Collins said.

Police in Chicago made more gun arrests in 2016 than in New York and Los Angeles combined, Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson said on Sunday.

"We will make 2017 a safer year for the city of Chicago," Johnson told reporters.

Johnson said he would lobby the Illinois legislature to reform sentencing guidelines for repeat gun offenders. Police would also focus on "targeted, data-driven enforcement" and make community policing "a department-wide philosophy," Johnson said.

REUTERS

Police investigate a shooting where a 23-year-old woman was shot in the chest and hand and a 25-year-old man was shot in the leg on Jan. 1, 2017 in Chicago, Illinois. GETTY IMAGES

"We will make 2017 a safer year for the city of Chicago."

Johnson

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Mariah Carey claims disastrous NYE show was sabotaged

She could've gone out on a high note, but Mariah Carey's team have decided to go low about her "performance train wreck" on New Year's Eve.

The pop diva's three-song set during "Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's Eve with Ryan Seacrest" was plagued with technical difficulties, eventually revealing that she was lip-synching to her song "Emotion." Carey initially tweeted shortly after the performance that "s— happens," but her manager, Stella Bulochnikov is now saying Dick Clark Productions intentionally botched her performance.

Bulochnikov tells Billboard that Carey's in-ear microphones weren't working, and the show's production team refused to remove her portion of the program from the West Coast television feed. "I asked him why would they want to run a performance with mechanical glitches unless they just want eyeballs at any expense," she says.

Dick Clark Productions isn't having it though, calling the accusations "defamatory, outrageous and frankly absurd" and saying Carey's team is to blame for the tech mishaps. What we want to know is, where was Ryan Seacrest? A good host helps performers when they're struggling — even the audience pitched in, finishing one of Carey's song before she walked offstage.

the word

EVA KIS
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2017 has its first power couple — or does it?

The new year has barely begun, but 2017 may already have a new power couple.

Drake and Jennifer Lopez have certainly been making their relationship Instagram official, cuddling and kissing during an event called the Winter Wonderland Prom in Las Vegas last week — nothing weird about a 17-year age difference at a high school dance — then spending NYE together and being spotted by TMZ the next day gambling at the MGM Grand.

But here's where things get tricky.

Page Six reports that the "prom" was part of a music video shoot for a new song the two are working on. "This relationship is fake, it is just a publicity stunt to publicize their record together," according to the Post. "If Jennifer and Drake were really dating, they'd be way more private about it."

Expect Drizzy, 30, and J. Lo, 47, both tend to keep their dating lives strictly to the celebrity set, so privacy isn't exactly their top priority. That said, we know what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Odds on this one being legit? Don't bet the block.

TWITTER/@ TODAYSHOW

Katie Couric is back as 'Today' host

It may be the start of a new year, but after the one that just ended we're rightly a little suspicious. But at least every morning this week, we can pretend it's 1997.

In a welcome bit of deja vu, Katie Couric is back at the "Today" show in the co-anchor chair next to Matt Lauer. "Welcome back to Studio 1A, January 1997, apparently?" Lauer joked. "It just feels like I never left," said Couric, who started on the program as a special correspondent in 1989 before becoming the co-host in 1991. She left the show in 2006.

Morning TV's much-missed power couple even had the same hairstyle when they first shared the desk, as Couric noted. In reply, Lauer pointed to his shaved head as if to say, "It hasn't been the same without you, Katie." Or maybe that's just us.

Enjoy the retro vibes while you can — Couric is only around through Friday, keeping the chair warm for Savannah Guthrie while she's on maternity leave.

Lauren Conrad is expecting!

"The Hills" star-turned-lifestyle maven vowed to bring more joy into her life this year, and it turns out she's got a little bundle coming soon. Conrad, 30, announced she's expecting her first child with husband William Tell on Instagram.

"Happy New Year! I have a feeling 2017 is going to be the best year yet," the mom-to-be posted along with a picture of her sonogram.

Conrad and singer-turned-lawyer Tell, 36, were married in a private ceremony in 2014. When asked about getting hitched by US Weekly, she said, "For us it makes you officially family, which is really great, but as far as our relationship, we were really committed before so it didn't change a ton." Already feeling like family is a great first step to parenthood, congrats!

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE

Taraji P. Henson wants to inspire young women

The "Empire" star talks about playing an under-known pioneer "Hidden Figures."

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When Taraji P. Henson went to meet Katherine Johnson — the woman she plays in "Hidden Figures" — she was greeted at Johnson's home by her two daughters. They hugged her and told the "Empire" actress, 46, how happy they were she was going to play their mother.

"I was like, 'No pressure,'" Henson jokes.

Set in the 1960s, "Hidden Figures" tells the story of three women — Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan (Octavia Spencer) and Mary Jackson (Janelle Monae) — who were integral in the early days of the space race. Johnson was a mathematician whose brilliance helped John Glenn become the first American to orbit the Earth. In fact, right before his launch, he specifically requested she make sure the numbers for his mission were correct.

In "Hidden Figures," Taraji P. Henson plays NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson, seen shaking hands with astronaut John Glenn (Glen Powell). HOPPER STONE

GETTY IMAGES

All three women were pioneers — not just women who rose in a STEM field, but black women living in Virginia in the early 1960s. Even while employees, all three faced discrimination, had to work harder to impress their white, male superiors. But when Henson talked to Johnson, now 98, she was surprised she didn't stew in her long-ago pain.

"I tried to make it weighty. I said, 'How does a black woman do it? They were misogynistic. I'm sure you got called the n-word.' And she was like, 'Well, you know, it just was the way it was. I just did my job,'" Henson recalls. "She was so humble. She would always say 'we.' In my mind, I'm like, 'No, Katherine, it was you. It was you and your mind alone that got Glenn to orbit the Earth. He didn't say, 'Go get so-and-so, so-and-so and so-and-so.' He said, 'Get the smart girl.' But the fact that she sees the 'we' in 'I' blew me away."

Henson was also blown away by Johnson's passion for math. She describes her eyes lighting up as she discussed her craft.

"If I had a teacher like her, I could have been a rocket scientist," Henson says. "When I was growing up, no one ever said to me, 'You can't do math because you're a girl.' But there was an understanding. You just grew up thinking math and science were for boys. Somebody lied to me, because this woman exists. All these women existed. I made it my mission to do this film, because I didn't want another girl to grow up believing that lie."

A key scene

One of the first scenes in "Hidden Figures" finds Johnson, Vaughan and Jackson on the side of the road on the way to work, fixing their broken car. Then a police car pulls up. A white cop comes out, looking suspicious. It's a scary scene to see right now — and all the more surprising when, upon finding they work at NASA, he changes his tune, even gives them an escort to work.

"You can feel the audience brace themselves when the cop arrives," Henson explains. "What's beautiful about that scene is you can see this man unlearn racism right before your eyes. It proves that your perception can change in a matter of minutes. That's when you know racism is learned. When he saw that these women's lives mattered to the great space race, that negativity he was about to spew on them shifted in the blink of an eye. If we can all get the human race back to some goal we can all focus on, I think the world will be more balanced. It's unbalanced right now."

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The man who brought Bryan Cranston back to comedy

Filmmaker John Hamburg talks about "Why Him?" and what's up with James Franco.

MATT PRIGGE
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Sixteen years ago, John Hamburg co-wrote "Meet the Parents." He loosely revisits the idea of a woman's new guy meeting his potential future in-laws with "Why Him?" This time, Hamburg reverses the plot: It's the parents (played by Bryan Cranston and Megan Mullally) who visit the new guy (James Franco). Cranston's Ned is none-too-pleased to discover his daughter (Zoey Deutch) is in love with Franco's Laird, a nouveau riche Silicon Valley god who's heavily tattooed, very randy and something of a sweet idiot.

Comedies are another thing that have become, if not obsolete, then rare.

GETTY IMAGES

When I made "I Love You Man," which wasn't that long ago, studios were making a lot of these midrange comedies. I started to see, as I was working on other projects, that fewer and fewer of the types of movies I make were being made. Once in a while one would sneak out, but it was very rare. Viewing habits have changed, as everyone knows. It was pretty great for me and for our cast that we were able to have this huge studio, Fox, support our movie. I think they were like, "OK, guess we're going to make an original comedy!" [Laughs]

This is Bryan Cranston's first big comedy since "Breaking Bad" changed his life. I'm imagining he was really excited to try something lighter.

I think "Why Him?" came at the right time for Bryan. He's this great character actor who worked on every TV series known to man, then broke through with "Malcolm in the Middle" playing a true goofball. Then obviously he became an icon with Walter White. I think all that darkness for six years, while a defining moment of his life, also took a toll on him. I think he was looking for something lighter, to use all those comedy chops he'd developed on "Malcolm in the Middle" but hadn't been put to use for a while. He's another genius. He comes to play, and he's a consistent source of ideas and suggestions. He's a very twisted man. No matter what you think, of the more edgy moments in the movie, I'd say a handful were his pitches.

James Franco, left, plays a Silicon Valley god who meets the parents (Bryan Cranston and Megan Mullally) of his new girlfriend (Zoey Deutch) in "Why Him?" TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

On Franco

James Franco does so many things: He writes books and paints and adapts difficult Faulkner and Cormac McCarthy novels into art movies. I was wondering what it's like to wrangle him over to a comedy.

A lot of my favorite actors to work with can do both drama and comedy. Franco certainly has both sides. He's a savant. He likes to sit close to set reading a book, very focused and doing his thing. You're like, "Is he listening? Is he present?" But that's just his way, to show up and focus and be quiet and not schmoozing with the other actors all the time. Apparently he's been like that his entire career. But once you get him in front of the camera, between "action" and "cut" he is just on fire. He knows every line, is brilliant at improv, is able to make adjustments, is very present with the other actors. He's one of the best actors I've ever worked with.

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Don't let a careless mistake ruin your chances.

LAKSHMI GANDHI
@LakshmiGandhi
lakshmi.gandhi@metro.us

Many high school seniors are spending the first few weeks of the new year putting the final touches on their college applications. While many students may just want to cross their fingers and finally hit send, it's best to take a deep breath and ensure you haven't made any last-minute mistakes.

"As students get ready to turn in their applications, we like to emphasize that human beings will be reading their applications, and that it's important to understand the admissions office's perspective," says Devin Harmon, a college-admissions counselor with the college consulting firm IvyWise. He gives us some pointers on making your application stand out.

Do a second read of your application

"I tell students to read everything out loud," says Harmon. "It's a proofreading thing, and it will also help you catch small errors and hear how your voice sounds in your answers." Harmon says students should have a relative read along silently. "When you write something and a word is missing, your brain is automatically going to put it in there. The person reading along will catch it," he says.

Look for cliches

It's important to remember that admissions officers sift through hundreds of applications each year. "They sometimes go through 90 applications a day," Harmon notes. "That can be tiring and montonous, and they tend to see the same kinds of essays and the same catchphrases over and over." Harmon recommends avoiding saying things like "I've always loved economics since I was a child" or sounding too academic in answers that are supposed to be personal.

Don't wait until the last minute

This might seem obvious, but in addition to opening yourself up to making careless mistakes, waiting until the last possible moment to submit your application can have other consequences. "In the last several years, so many students send off the common application on the last possible day, and right after they hit send they get an error message. It's like seeing the iceberg on the Titanic. That's definitely something to avoid."

To avoid disaster scenarios like that one, Harmon advises students to turn in their applications at least a week ahead of the final deadline and to plan accordingly.

Keep yourself grounded

Harmon urges students to remain realistic throughout the process. "What are you planning to do after you hit the submit button?" he asks. "If you get deferred or wait-listed from your top choice, they will want to see improved grades over the next quarter. You have to be the best student you can be."

While it can seem like not getting in to your top school is the most devastating thing that can happen, its important to keep some perspective. "Applying to college is not the start of your life, and it's not the end of your life," says Harmon. "You want to keep improving, no matter what."

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Busy Philipps talks self-care in the new year

Busy Philipps has partnered with Campbell's to promote its Well Yes! line of soups. PROVIDED

The actress partners with Campbell Soup's #WellYesMoment.

KATE MOONEY
@yatinbrooklyn
kate.mooney@metro.us

Busy Philipps agrees that the pressure to make — and keep — New Year's resolutions can be overwhelming.

"They're tough, right?" says the actress. "Everyone has that experience of making that lofty, unrealistic New Year's resolution only to feel like a total failure two weeks in, and that's not a great way to start your year off."

The 37-year-old, who first won us over as lovable bully Kim Kelly in "Freaks and Geeks" and is now making us laugh as Neal Gamby's (Danny McBride) ex-wife Gale Liptrapp in the HBO comedy "Vice Principals," prefers the idea of making smaller, incremental changes.

She's partnered with Campbell's Soup to promote its #WellYesMoment, a campaign encouraging folks to share their small daily victories — year round.

The effort is in conjunction with the release of Campbell's line of Well Yes! Soups: nine flavors featuring wholesome, nutritious ingredients in preservative-free, non-BPA lined cans. The hearty choices include a black-bean soup with red quinoa, and a sweet potato and corn chowder with red peppers and wild rice.

"I really enjoy soup as a quick, easy thing to eat for lunch," says the mother of two. "And I'm a firm believer in being able to pronounce things on labels. I won't buy things for me or my kids if it seems like it's not whole, simple ingredients — I'm not interested in putting it in my body."

Daily positive moments

What does a #WellYesmoment mean to Philipps? Taking time for yourself and avoiding the guilt trip, especially as a working mother. "If I need to go get a facial, I'm not going to feel bad about that. I'm going to enjoy that moment," she says.

The concept also informs her post-election approach to the new year.

"Everybody's got this thing, like, 'Let's hope that 2017 isn't as terrible as 2016.' Look, there is so much in the world that is out of our control, and we know that," she says. "But we can control the positive things that we can do on a day to day basis — and maybe there is something to it. If we all choose to have a more positive outlook, then it's a butterfly effect that can really change things."

Especially when it comes to service work. "Opening up your checkbook is amazing; the other thing is, people can give their time, which is free, and in many ways, more valuable," she says, adding that she strives to teach her kids the value of helping those less fortunate.

In the Lenny Letter article "After the Election," Philipps shares a recent conversation she had with her 8-year-old, Birdie. "We will fight for what's right and for people who can't fight," she tells her. "We will keep volunteering and raising money for things like public libraries ... and the ACLU and Planned Parenthood."

Staying fit for the mind and body

Philipps has a, well, busy year ahead. Season Two of "Vice Principals" drops in the summer, and in the meantime, she's sold a pilot to HBO and is writing a film, which she hopes to also direct.

To keep motivated, the California resident makes sure she exercises regularly.

"I need the endorphins," she says. "Working out is as important to me for my body and my brain. If I don't, it's a noticeable difference — I get dark real fast." When traveling for work, as soon as she lands she'll hit up a SoulCycle or squeeze in a run.

"It's very important to sweat," she says, adding that she's really into infrared saunas right now. "Go to Higher Dose on the Lower East Side," she says. "You'll feel like you've gotten a full body massage."

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4 Philly workouts to try in the new year

Juliet Sabella of The Wall Cycling Studio PROVIDED

Put the fun in fitness.

JENNIFER LOGUE
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After a month of holiday parties, excessive boozing and eating your weight in cookies, it's time to undo the damage by getting into a regular fitness routine. Easier said than done, right? But if you make working out fun, it goes from being a chore to something you enjoy. The monotony of running on a treadmill stops here. Start off your new year fresh by trying out one of these creative Philly workouts.

Grateful Dead Yoga

Are you both intrigued and intimidated by yoga? Are you also a deadhead? Well, Grateful Dead Yoga is perfect for you. At the National Museum of American Jewish history, this special class sets a calming series of poses to the soundtrack of the Dead's vast catalog. With museum admission the class is free, but you need to bring your own mat.

Wednesday, Jan. 11
6 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.
National Museum of American Jewish History
101 S. Independence Mall East
Free with museum admission
nmajh.org

Spin/Barre Fusion

The Wall Cycling Studio in Manayunk offers a variety of classes but is debuting a new one in 2017 — Spin/Barre Fusion. Combine your love of cycling with a dash of ballet for this 50-minute class that covers both cardio and focused toning exercises. When it comes to getting in shape, owner Juliet Sabella offers the following advice: "Take your new routine one day at a time."

The Wall Cycling Studio
107 Cotton St.
Class times vary
$16 per class
thewallcycling.com

Functional Interval Training

OK — so you ate a lot of cookies this holiday season. How about a high intensity burn with Functional Interval Training (FIT) at Roots Athletics? This circuit-training session implements medicine balls, resistance bands and battle ropes to get your blood pumping and your muscles fierce. Expect to burn between 900 to 1,300 calories in each class. If you need a little more motivation to try it — the first class is free! No excuses.

Roots Athletics
2101 Brandywine St.
Mondays and Wednesdays at 6 p.m.
Membership options vary
rootsphilly.com

Dance classes

Just because you stopped taking dance classes once you hit high school doesn't mean you can't start up again! Koresh Dance Academy at Rittenhouse Square offers beginner, intermediate and advanced classes for adults. Choose from tap, ballet, jazz and even hip-hop to add a little spring to your step and get the body moving after spending hours behind a desk. What's more, your first class is only $5. (Less than that peppermint mocha latte!)

Koresh Dance Company
2002 Rittenhouse Square
Class times vary
$15 per class
koreshdance.org

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5 Reasons the Eagles will make playoffs next season

Look beyond the standings before you evaluate the Eagles 2016 season.

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Eagles fans have every reason to believe that Carson Wentz will play even better in his second season. GETTY IMAGES

The Eagles didn't make the playoffs this season and there are a bevy of reasons why. Carson Wentz had no help from his wide receivers, Lane Johnson's suspension tossed the offensive line into disarray and the Birds played the toughest schedule in the NFL.

In Doug Pederson's second year — even in the loaded NFC East (which will in all likelihood be loaded again in 2017) the Eagles are a good bet to make the postseason 12 months from now.

Here are the five biggest reasons why:

1 Their schedule

With the No. 4 spot in the NFC East standings, Philly has assured a last-place schedule in 2017, meaning they'll face the Jaguars and Panthers, along with the mostly weak NFC West. They still have six games against their difficult division and four games against the AFC West — but it is a much easier slate than they faced in the 2016 season.

2 They were better than 7-9

Despite finishing in the middle of the standings and out of postseason contention, pretty much as early as Week 14, Philly will finish the season with the fifth-ranked DVOA in all of football. The advanced metric looks at a team's productivity on both sides of the ball and determines how a team's performance on the field ranks despite the win-loss record. Philly had the No. 1 special teams unit in all of football in 2016 as well.

With an easier strength of schedule, a sophomore Wentz and Pederson and perhaps some better luck in close games (they were 1-6 in one-touchdown decisions), the Eagles were better than the standings say they were in 2016.

3 Carson Wentz, Year 2

The Eagles' rookie quarterback went from being a third-stringer holding a clipboard for four months to setting an NFL record for completions by a first-year player. He took nearly every snap this season and showed the league that, even with a few hiccups, he is a franchise quarterback. Eagles fans should be optimistic about Year 2.

"He's really seeing the field," Pederson said after the Eagles' season-ending win over Dallas. "He's surveying the field. He's using his legs. He's a gifted runner. He knows where everybody is going to be. He's got great dialogue and communication on the sideline, on the football field. His leadership ability. He's an exciting player to watch and to coach, and it's a pleasure having him this year. In his rookie season, to do the things that he's done just is amazing, and really looking forward to the offseason and building for next year."

4 Advanced weaponry

The Eagles will be focusing on skill players in 2017. There is no way their wide receiving slate can be worse than it was in 2016. Wide receivers not named Jordan Matthews combined for barely 1,000 yards receiving total — leaving Zach Ertz, the other tight ends and the running backs to make up for the deficiency of a unit that should be, at worst twice as productive.

With players like DeSean Jackson and Alshon Jeffery likely to be available in 2017 and a draft class that boasts potent wide receivers and more than a few above average running backs, the skill positions will be better next season.

5 The defense

No one will argue that the Eagles' defense was a model of consistency. However it showed in stretches that it can be one of the best units in football. The safety tandem of Malcolm Jenkins and Rodney McLeod proved to be a strength, as did the linebacking unit led by Jordan Hicks, who has caused 11 turnovers in 24 total games. The defensive line had some lackluster games but does boast Pro Bowler Fletcher Cox and should-be Pro Bowler Brandon Graham. Add some solid cornerbacks and the unit should be stronger in 2017.

"I think we can win with the players we've got," Hicks said Sunday. "I think it's just a matter of execution. Obviously the front office will do what they have to do, but for us, the players, the focus is execution and getting better individually."

Flyers among NHL's top offenses, worst defenses

One thing seems to be certain if you're heading to any Flyers game this season: There will be a lot of goals scored.

If you add together the Flyers goals scored per game (2.87, the seventh best in hockey) and their goals allowed per game (2.97, the fifth most) you have the second-highest total in the NHL, second by a tenth of a goal to the lowly Islanders in these categories combined.

The team has scored 112 goals in 39 games, the fourth most in the NHL and boasts scorers in the top 10 in both goals (Wayne Simmonds) and assists (Jake Voracek).

Their offense has kept them competitive and has them in playoff contention, but it hasn't won quite as much as it should.

In Sunday night's shootout loss to the Ducks, Philly shot the puck 55 times, finding nylon just three times and outshot Anaheim by 30 — but they still lost.

"Put up 55 shots, you're going to win most games," defenseman Michal Del Zotto said. "It's unfortunate we didn't get the two points. We've been in a little bit of a lull, but we keep playing like that, we'll be successful."

Not surprisingly, of 32 NHL teams the Flyers rank seventh in shots per game (31.3) but are also seventh in shots allowed per game (28.8). That advantage hasn't translated into the standings as their 20-14-5 record is several points behind the Penguins, Blue Jackets and Rangers, the top three teams in the East.

"That's the mentality you have to have," Brayden Schenn said of the Flyers' ability to shoot the puck — despite their struggles elsewhere. "You can't get frustrated by that. The more pucks you throw on net, the better chance you have scoring."

Philly has a few days off before hosting the Rangers on Wednesday night at 8 on CSN.

EVAN MACY

Wayne Simmonds once again is a scoring machine. ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

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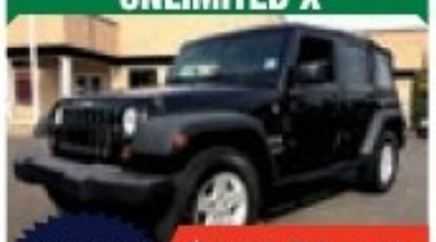
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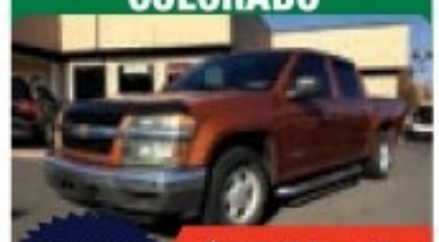
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WILL THE EAGLES BE SMITTEN BY FOOL'S GOLD?

GLEN MACNOW

OPINION

Glen Macnow has been an outspoken voice in Philly sports for nearly three decades. @realglenmacnow

Congrats all around to Doug Pederson's Eagles for taking those final two games. You sent the fans home happy. Your players didn't quit, if that's the bar we're using to measure success.

Yes, winning beats losing. But don't let these meaningless victories fog your judgment of a team that lost nine. Don't let this become 2011 again. That was the season Andy Reid started out 4-8 before winning the final four and saving his own job for 2012. Remember how that turned out?

I'm not suggesting Coach Doug should go. But the phrase that came to capture that 2011 illusion — "fool's gold" — again seems apt. With their 7-9 finish, these Eagles are a flawed team needing a major offseason makeover.

Where to start? The wide receiving corps is a disaster, save Jordan Matthews — and he's more of a steady player than a game-breaking threat. The collection of running backs is even feebler.

"We're very close. We're very close. And when you talk to coaches around the league, they see it." Doug Pederson

The starting cornerbacks must be replaced, for what seems like the 40th straight offseason. There are needs at edge rusher, defensive tackle (if Bennie Logan leaves) and outside linebacker (as the team soured on Mychel Kendricks).

Now the good news. The Eagles have their franchise QB. Yes, Carson Wentz started 2016 stronger than he finished it. Yes, he has flaws. He's often late delivering the ball. He throws into traffic and sometimes high. He needs to learn to toss it away.

But those are fixable defects. Wentz, above all, is a smart and athletic kid with all the tools to make it as a star. He was durable enough to play all 16 games and in some areas — like using his legs to extend plays — kept improving this season.

I think middle linebacker Jordan Hicks proved to be a cornerstone on defense. His two interceptions Sunday made him the first NFL linebacker since Jack Ham (1971-72) to garner 11 turnovers in his first 24 games.

So Hicks, Fletcher Cox, Brandon Graham and Malcolm Jenkins give the Eagles four high-level defensive starters. That's not bad.

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Towns in town, Take 2

The Sixers and Timberwolves go toe-to-toe on the South Philly hardwood Tuesday night, a 7 p.m. start on CSN. All eyes will be on Joel Embiid and Karl Anthony-Towns, as the dup will do battle under the rim for the second time this season. GETTY IMAGES

Eagles' offensive line than most, particularly if they find a way to return Jason Peters (who stands to count $11 million against the cap). A full season of Lane Johnson (please) and development of this year's two rookies signal a solid line going forward.

So it's not inconceivable to see this team in the playoff hunt next season — unless they actually believe Pederson when he says "we're very close." Smug satisfaction with 7-9 would be that fool's gold.

The key man is personnel director Joe Douglas, imported last offseason from the Ravens. He — and not GM Howie Roseman — has to conduct a draft that turns up no Danny Watkins or Nelson Agholors. He has to figure out which free agent receiver (Alshon Jeffery? Terrelle Pryor? DeSean Jackson?) becomes Wentz's go-to deep threat. He has to find those late-round and undrafted pearls that lift a roster without crushing the salary cap.

It is doable. Now the Eagles just have to let Douglas do his job.

The Eagles' defense will return studs like Malcolm Jenkins and Jordan Hicks in 2017. GETTY IMAGES

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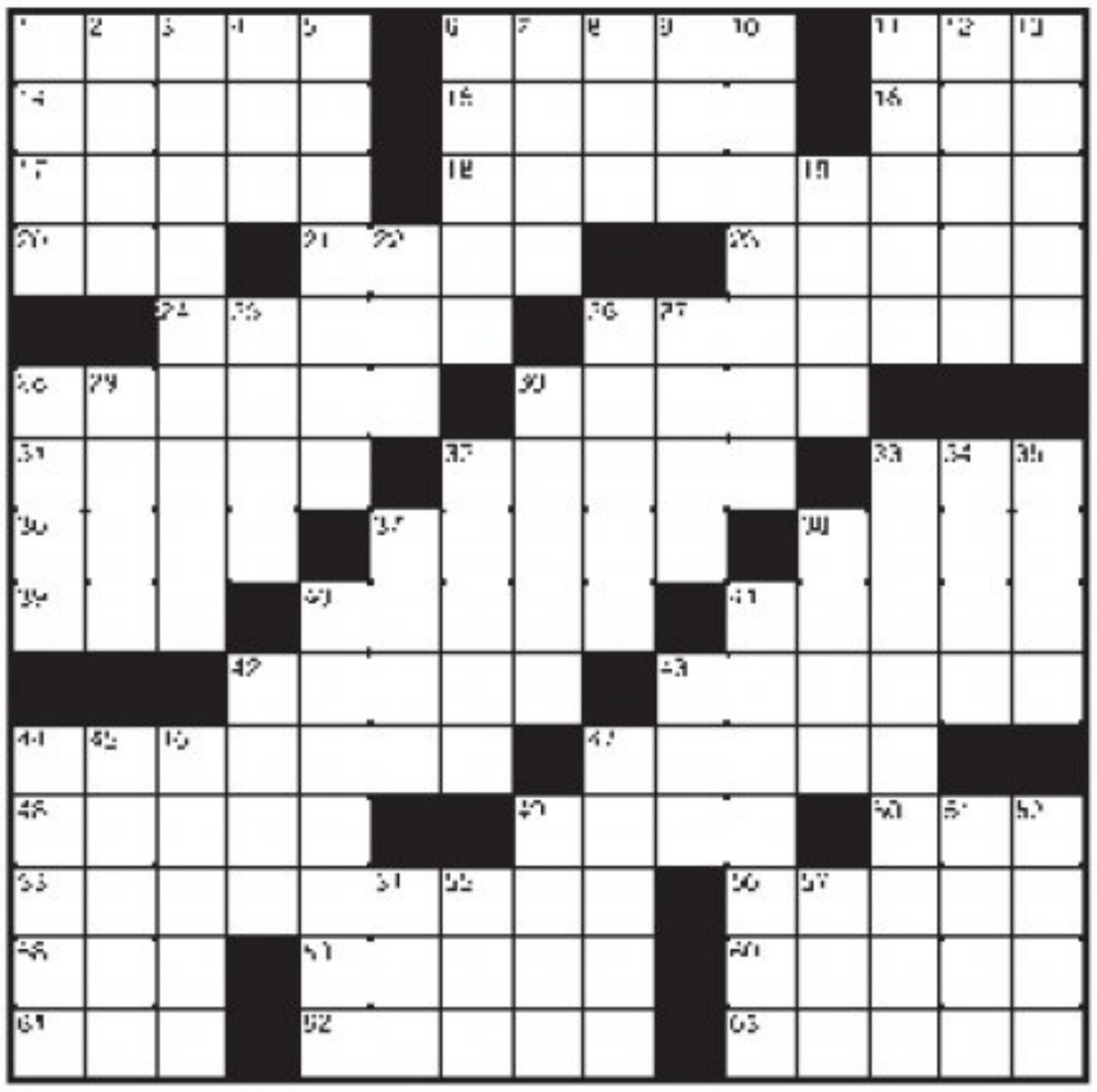
Across
1 Clover leaves
6 Dock
11 Luxury resort
14 Wide-awake
15 Monopoly buy
16 MacGraw of films
17 Smaller than mini
18 All worked up (3 wds.)
20 -- choy
21 Belmont Stakes
23 Chief followers
24 Get-up-and-go
26 Brownish songbirds
28 Tool with a belt
30 Hula-dance fetes
31 Importuned
32 Send, as money
33 Pinch hitter
36 Plasma particles
37 Fleece, in a way
38 Remove the rind
39 Barge pusher
40 Duos
41 Insurance giant
42 Resources
43 Canvas buyer
44 Tall cactus
47 Put in a snit
48 Megastars
49 Online auction
50 DDE
53 As a knight would
56 Spiked the punch
58 Lay low
59 Simon and Diamond
60 Veld grazer
61 Almost grads
62 Brings under control
63 Like pretzels

Down
1 Coleridge friend
2 Melange
3 Exercising the forefinger
4 Blow it
5 Unleashed fury
6 Voter's dilemma
7 Sharpen up
8 -- -- snail's pace
9 Family mem.
10 Bluntly (2 wds.)
11 Sir, in Delhi
12 Annapolis frosh
13 Buenos --
19 -- bien, monsieur!
22 Aries mo.
25 Poet's tributes
26 Catamounts
27 Tiny margin
28 Kind of curl
29 Matty or Felipe
30 Wanton looks
32 Zoo heavyweight
33 Caustic
34 Coffee servers
35 Worn to a frazzle
37 German industrial region
38 Hitter -- Rose
40 Lowly laborer
41 Sporty socks
42 Reflect upon
43 Wheel buy (2 wds.)
44 Weary sounds
45 Oil-well capper Red --
46 Fall colors
47 Yawning gulf
49 "Vogue" rival
51 Superman, incognito
52 Vortex
54 PBS funder
55 Youngest Cratchit
57 Tenn. neighbor



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easy

1			8	6		3		
4	2	3				7		
	8			2				
		8	7	5			2	1
5	6			1	3	8		
				8			5	
		1				4	6	9
		2		3	9			8

hard

		8			1			
5		6	7		8			1
		3	9			8		
7			1	2				
	3	1				7	2	
				8	7			3
		5			6	4		
4			8		5	6		7
			4			9		

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Maintaining a strong sense of discipline and living within your means will help you reduce stress. Too much of anything will lead to problems at work and in the home.

Taurus Do something nice for someone; it doesn't have to entail a hefty price tag. Living within your means will help keep your stress level low and your bank account fat.

Gemini Listen to your heart, not to what others tell you. Don't feel that you have to overachieve to make an impression. If someone doesn't accept you, move on.

Cancer Explore new avenues, travel to unfamiliar places and do things that excite you. Live in the moment and strive for self-awareness and perfection. Make love a priority.

Leo Set up a routine that will help you strive to look and be your best. Changes at home will initially help, but if you don't follow through with them, nothing will change.

Virgo Mixing business with pleasure will lead to stronger alliances. An important partnership will improve if you spend more time nurturing it and less time trying to buy love.

Libra It's a good day to initiate change. If someone beats you to it, you aren't going to be happy with the outcome or the time it will take you to revise your plans.

Scorpio Make your home a place of comfort, and designate a space that you find conducive to creative pursuits. It's OK to do things differently. Don't wait for validation.

Sagittarius You need to re-evaluate matters and think about what you could have done differently. It's never too late to learn or to change your mind or direction.

Capricorn Your charm will help you win favors from people who can contribute to your success. Express your feelings in order to receive the encouragement you need.

Aquarius A change will do you good. Something you always wanted to do will be possible now. Volunteer for something you believe in or negotiate on your behalf.

Pisces Your charm will help you win favors or gain the support you need from someone influential. Don't feel pressured to make an impulsive decision. EUGENIA LAST

December 28th's answers

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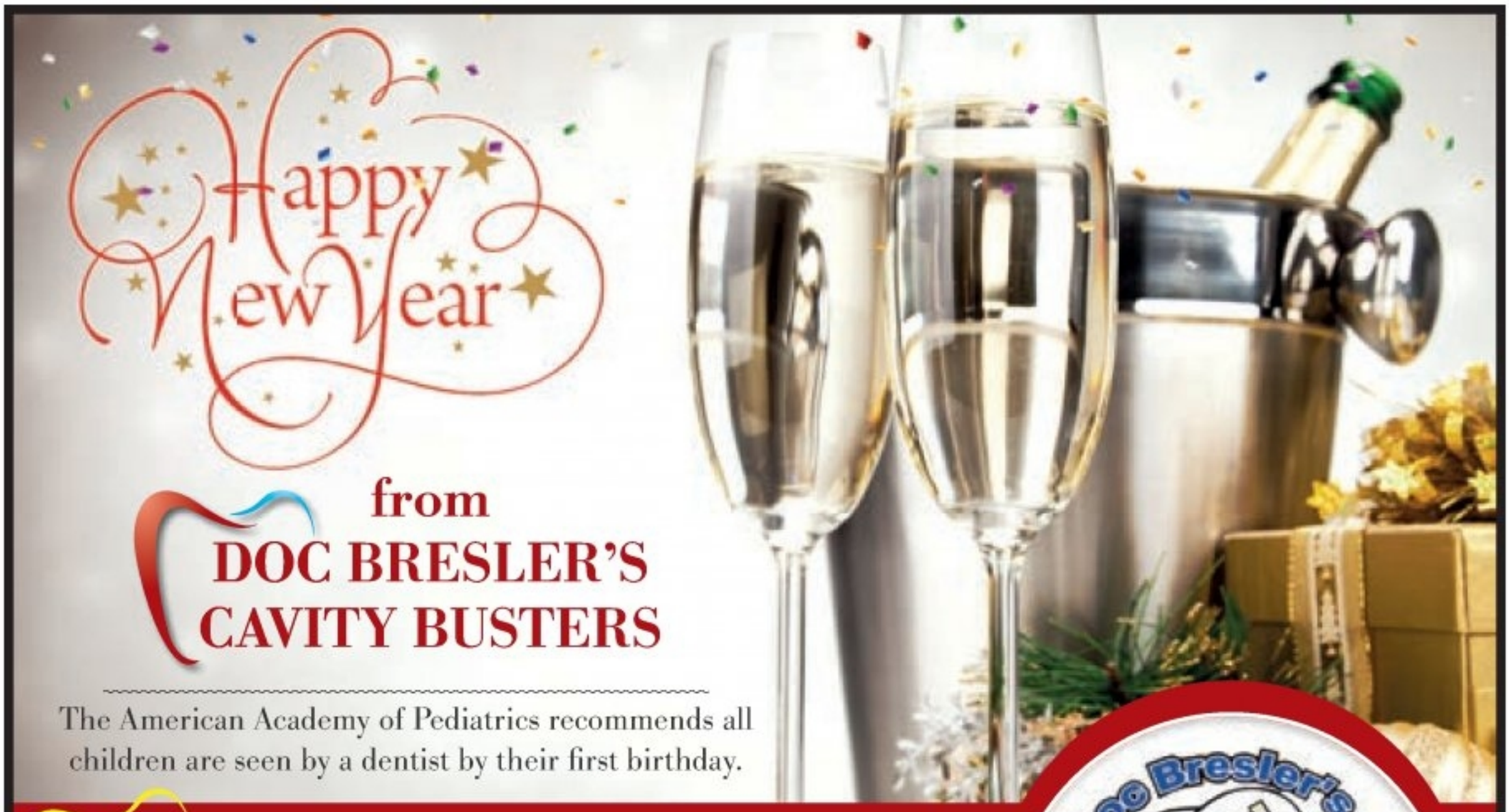

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